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## Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness

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Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness

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**Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness****Abstract**

The Community Awareness for Diabetes Awareness Program has been implemented by the Central Coast YMCA Corporate office through outreach events highlighting the Diabetes Prevention Program. The rates of prediabetes are shockingly high not only in the United States, but here in Monterey County where the rate of prediabetic citizens is 18 percent higher than the rest of the country. When considering the major factors that contribute to creating this problem, the lack of education surrounding prediabetes and its effects, low levels of physical activity and lack of access to affordable fruits and vegetables are at the top of the list. This project has been designed to discover specific populations that are not benefitting from the health programs offered by the YMCA by utilizing basic surveys defining the level of success of each event. The expected outcome is to bolster participant and cohort numbers in communities that display the most need. The project has produced minimal results uncovering specific populations in need of prediabetes education, as the collection of data is still underway. Continued YMCA participation in administering these questionnaires at outreach events to collect more data is suggested to maximize the level of success the program has to offer. It is also recommended that this agency appoint a staff member to head this position and continue to modify the surveys to yield pertinent data to uncover underrepresented populations in need.

Key words: diabetes, prediabetes, outreach, awareness, health-promotion

### Agency and Communities Served

The Central Coast YMCA is an organization designed to “embrace the values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility with a mission to strengthen community through programs that develop youth, support healthy living and foster social responsibility” (YMCA, 2018.). The concept is that by assisting the community to gain more skills and providing the support necessary to lead fulfilling and healthy lives, they can create a more conscious society that raises socially comprehensive young adults. Through the YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), coaches have been trained to lead a specific cohort of individuals that are prediabetic and therefore, at a greater risk to develop type II diabetes to make healthier decisions pertaining to eating and physical activity. This year long commitment stays congruent with the YMCA’s vision to create a healthier community through aiding these prediabetic individuals in gaining the skills necessary to lower their chances of developing type 2 diabetes. It is through this particular department that the Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness program has been launched, maintained and modified. The YMCA has recently introduced two more programs to further increase the health of the community: the Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program, designed to increase awareness regarding high blood pressure over a four month span and the Enhance Fitness Program, which has been engineered to increase mobility and flexibility among older adults.

The communities served through these programs are individuals that have been determined to be at an elevated risk for developing type 2 diabetes. This typically comes through a physician’s referral for patients that meet the criteria of the program; participants are at least 18 years old, have a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or higher, 22 or higher if the client is of Asian descent and has a blood glucose level (A1C) between 5.7% and 6.4% (YMCA, 2018). There is

also a brief self-assessment designed to determine whether someone is at risk for individuals who may have heard about the program and refer themselves on a walk-in basis. These stipulations ensure that participants meet the basic criteria for the program and are therefore, in a position to greatly benefit from the concept of increasing their physical activity to 150 minutes per week, setting their individual daily fat gram intake, and losing 5%-9% of their total body weight by the end of the year. In adhering to these three components of the program, participants stand to decrease their likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes “by as much as 58% to 71% among adults aged 60 years or older” (YMCA, 2018). As the Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness Program continues to partner with the YMCA and collect data pertinent to determining the success of outreach events, the goal is to unearth some of the populations that may be slipping through the cracks of the assessment and neglecting to benefit from these health-conscious opportunities.

#### Problem, Issue or Need

The bottom line is that approximately 27 percent of Americans are already prediabetic yet, in Monterey County it is estimated that 45 percent of all residents are falling in this same category (Health Policy, 2014). The rate of prediabetic citizens is 18 percent higher in Monterey County than the rest of the country. When considering the major factors that contribute to creating this problem, the lack of education surrounding prediabetes and its effects, low levels of physical activity and lack of access to affordable fruits and vegetables are at the top of the list. These present a trickle-down effect pertaining to the social and economic health of the county because with the high level of Latinos living in Monterey County, the statistic that “diabetes disproportionately affects black and Latino populations (they are nearly 2 times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes)” (YMCA, 2018), becomes a relevant factor.

As discussed earlier, some of the major risk factors associated with developing prediabetes and diabetes are the lack of education and awareness of the diseases and their effects, the low levels of physical activity and the lack of access to affordable fruits and vegetables. These factors are directly correlated with the increasing numbers of those that develop prediabetes, as without a knowledge that the disease even exists, the desire to learn about the risks involved is non-existent. Statistical data that indicates the pressing manner of the issue is plentiful. “In California, the rate (of diabetes) has increased by 35 percent since 2001” (Seipel, 2016) and specifically, “in Monterey county, the UCLA research indicates that 45 percent of all adults have pre-diabetes and 37 percent of people ages 18-39” (Seipel, 2016). Considering the reality that most people are not even cognizant of the fact that they have this disease, the dire need for educational outreach becomes clearer.

When discussing low levels of physical activity, it is fairly-safe to say that most people recognize that being overweight or stagnant is a sign of unhealthy living. However, the direct connection between inactivity, being overweight or obese and developing prediabetes is not so obvious. In the YMCA’s DPP statistical data it has been proven that by lowering your body weight by 5 to 9 percent and increasing your physical activity to 150 minutes per week, individuals can lower the likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes by 58 to 71 percent. (YMCA, 2018) This link directly correlates the risks of a sedentary lifestyle and diabetes or pre-diabetes which in turn, underscores the necessity for programs that bring awareness to the community.

Lastly, the lack of access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables is a very legitimate concern. This may seem somewhat contradictory to common sense when considering the fact that Monterey County is such a well-established and successful agricultural-hub. But the truth really is that many residents can’t afford to purchase these foods and therefore, have very limited

knowledge pertaining to how to utilize them in every day cooking. In a study conducted by the Institute for Rural Studies, it was found that “despite this agricultural bounty, Monterey County has the highest rate of adults in food insecure households out of all California counties, with a ranking of 58<sup>th</sup> in the state” (Kresge, 2011). What this-amounts to is “there are approximately 51,000 adults, or 49 percent of adults, in this county with incomes lower than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level who are food insecure” (Kresge, 2011). This study was specifically aimed at the farm workers of the region and again, the numbers gathered here convey a strong need for more societal outreach.

The consequences of the higher rates of prediabetes and diabetes in the county of Monterey are vast. When looking at national numbers, it is estimated that “medical expenses for people with diabetes are 2.3 times greater than those without” (YMCA, 2018). That compounded by the fact that “someone diagnosed with diabetes by the age of 40 will have a lifetime medical spending that is \$124,600 more than someone who does not have diabetes” (Robledo, 2016) justify the necessity for societal outreach. In a recent study on the cost of chronic diseases by county, it was estimated that in 2010, the overall financial burden of diabetes on the county of Monterey was a staggering \$136,234,787 which by far surpassed the burden of the same disease on the neighboring Santa Cruz County which was estimated at a much lower \$81,591,198 for the same year. (Brown, Gonzalez & Dhau, 2015) This serves as a catalyst to drive up the rates of healthcare for all citizens within the county which then effects the overall health of the county.

| Contributing Factors   | Issue/Problem  | Consequences   |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of education</li> <li>• Low levels of physical activity</li> <li>• Lack of access to affordable fruits and vegetables</li> </ul> | <p>The rate of prediabetic citizens is 18% higher than the rest of the country</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical expenses force people into poverty</li> <li>• Financial burden on county</li> <li>• Healthcare rates go up</li> </ul> |

### Capstone Project Description and Justification

The project that has been designed is entitled Community Outreach for Prediabetes Awareness. The concept is fairly-simple ideologically: organize community outreach events in an effort to discover what specific populations knows about prediabetes and the risks of developing type 2 diabetes. In doing so, these events are intended to partner with other organizations and events to utilize the gathering of community members and collect information regarding the public's knowledge about the health topic. Such examples of specific venues would be setting up tables at the Salinas YMCA, local farmer's markets, medical conferences and health fairs as collaborative efforts with partnering organizations. Simple questionnaires have been developed to track how many people were contacted and what percentage of those people are actually aware of prediabetes. This provided context for comprehending how knowledgeable these populations are, therefore assessing how effective these outreach events are and where the next event might be more effective.



In creating these events, the YMCA intends to address what populations, if any are not being represented within the spectrum of intended beneficiaries. In assessing how informed specific populations are at, for example the Salinas YMCA, it can be gauged whether that outreach event was successful in getting the word out to community members that may or may not be aware of prediabetes. Should the percentages of people aware of the disease in contrast to those that responded show a skewed trend of informed individuals, the YMCA can then assess if a different venue may be more successful.

The next step was to create a Google calendar that all Lifestyle Coaches will be able to access at their convenience. This calendar includes event names, dates, times, locations and who was to attend, in an effort to streamline the entire process of outreach communication. Emails detailing all of the pertinent dates, times and locations of outreach events were sent to all Lifestyle Coaches requesting assistance in realizing the goal of making the significance of prediabetes awareness a priority. This method of communication proved to be a fundamental component of producing a successful and effective presence at outreach events in Monterey County. As stated, the utilization of surveys at outreach events that were created by the outreach event coordinator and Bill Proulx, and was included in the event materials to monitor how successful these locations were. Interns administered the questionnaires while tabling, yielding data reflecting participation of community members and their knowledge about the existence of the disease of prediabetes. The first month of surveys dictated that at least fifty percent of respondents have already been aware of prediabetes which prompted the discussion for altering the locations of outreach events to attempt to discover other populations in need.

Consistent research regarding what type of events are taking place in the county of Monterey has been a vital piece of this project. Finding organizations and events that share a

desire to improve community health has proven to be an effective way to get the word out regarding the programs the YMCA has to offer. By collaborating with these organizations, the concept of spreading information, promoting education and improving the overall health of the community has been a common thread, therefore, strengthening the professional relationship between organizations and the community on-the-whole. Professional communication with program directors and event coordinators to promote the program was a vital factor in achieving the goal of attending as many outreach events as possible, to further understand the level of effectiveness each event produces.

Some of the obstacles that arose during the implementation of this project involved the ongoing participation from Bill Proulx and other interns necessary to maximize the results of this research. Finding a variety of venues to perform outreach events was challenging, as the mentor was hesitant to deviate from the established protocol, from which much success had been produced. Maintaining a constant focus on the outcomes and goals of the project while also promoting flexibility has conveyed what professional development looks like in the field. The necessary participation from other interns in realizing the project has also proved to be an obstacle as requiring more from their schedules is something that had not been considered in the beginning stages of development, proving to be a bit short sighted in full comprehension of program implementation.

### Project Results

Project results for the Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness Program have been slightly sporadic. The information that was gathered pertaining to outreach location and the associated comprehension of the diseases of diabetes and prediabetes by the population, indicated that further outreach at those specific venues would not yield significant results. On the

contrary, data suggests that the majority of individuals surveyed were not only aware of diabetes and its dangers but they had also been exposed to at least superficial information regarding the prevalence and severity of the disease of prediabetes. Specifically, the data gathered from all of the surveys showed that of the 45 individuals that responded, 37 (82%) of them were already aware of prediabetes. These results show that the venues that were selected for outreach already possess an informed population regarding these diseases and imply that while partnering with organizations with similar health related goals can be beneficial, these particular-locations produced information of little significance. These venues included local farmer's markets, street fairs, health fairs, pharmacies, senior living facilities and Central Coast YMCA locations throughout Monterey County. The intended outcome, which was uncovering populations that lacked a basic understanding of the danger of these diseases, therefore, indicating a need for further development of the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program cohorts in those areas did not occur. However, an unexpected outcome that was birthed as a result of the program was a strong development of promising relationships between the YMCA and senior facilities.

While the practice of outreach can be a difficult topic to effectively encompass and duplicate, its presence is necessary for the molding and modification of successful health education or promotion programs. The results gained from this particular program suggest that continued investment into outreach events is a viable strategy to improve community knowledge and present realistic actions to be taken to address the topic of diabetes and prediabetes within our communities. The minimal amount of evidence gathered from surveys presented at outreach events conveyed the need for an expanded version of this program in order to yield region specific results that could be used to determine future events and ultimately, the production of more YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program participants and cohorts to address the populations in

need. This also suggests that efforts by the YMCA to address the severity of prediabetes within the regions of focus are effective enough to have assisted in informing 82% of residents of this issue. While the data obtained did not highlight specific regions of Monterey County that displayed a lack of prediabetes knowledge and awareness, the program's surveys did show areas of success regarding this same category. In essence, the continued elaboration and modification of surveys, as well as the systematic progression of event location displayed the promise of successfully increasing participant numbers within the YMCA's programs contingent upon expanding upon time invested and allowing the program to evolve organically.

As discussed previously, the intention of the Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness Program was to discover specific pockets of Monterey County's population that were not being equitably exposed to the benefits of the YMCA's programs, and further developing cohorts within those areas. However, of the 8 surveys collected that reflected a need for health education regarding the diseases, 6 (75%) were located in Salinas, Ca, which is where the large majority of the cohorts have been and are being established. This means that only two respondents were in regions in which cohorts are lacking. Of those two, only one was in the Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito tri-county area. This-signposts the lack of effectiveness of this project at the level in which it was administered due to the fact that only 2% of respondents that conveyed a need for diabetes and prediabetes education were geographically located within the scope of the program's reach. While the very concept of uncovering underrepresented populations implies that the number of citizens discovered will be small, 2 out of 100 is more minute than what was intended. However, given the proper attention, resources and timeframe the research proposes a level of success that would constitute the creation of more YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program cohorts and therefore continued efforts in the project. Although the

data obtained was limited, the results lend themselves to the success of the YMCA in advocating for the spread of educational information in their regions of particular focus, thereby reaffirming the commitment to contribute to the improved health of the community.

The strengths of this program lie in the details of the organization. As consistent professional communication between the program coordinator and coordinators of potential outreach locations was a mandatory component of the project, the strengthening of relationships between organizations that strive to improve the health and lives of community constituents resulted. This brought forth plans for future collaboration, specifically between the YMCA and local senior living facilities where the mentor is scheduled to make periodic appearances, exposing new participants to health promotion programs. Secondly, the establishment of a Google Calendar that allowed CSUMB interns to view upcoming outreach events in advance has been more efficient in the allocation of intern hours than previous coordination methods. Coupled with that, the organizer sending pre-event emails to inform interns of outreach opportunities has been successful in fostering an environment in which, interns may participate in these events without further or last-minute arrangement of their schedules. While this was intended to strengthen intraorganizational communication, and simultaneously, boost numbers of interns taking part in outreach, the latter remained to be seen as minimal intern attendance for events persisted. This reflected the difficulty associated with the issue of time management, with which CSUMB interns already struggle to maintain the fine balance of personal, professional, academic and internship responsibilities.

The other major obstacle that presented itself during the implementation of this program was attributed to the typical struggles that arise associated with professional communication. In this case, from the outreach coordinator's perspective, recognition that those overseeing the

growth and maintaining the efficiency of the YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program have done so due to the success in which it has shown. With that understanding emanates the very rational tendency for these administrators to maintain the direction proven most fruitful and exhibit caution when deviation from current practice is suggested. Hence, the coordinator of the Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness Program has been ushered into a position that necessitates skillful and diplomatic adaptability while approaching the realm of outreach location, giving precedence to what has proven functionally successful. As indicated, this was an exercise in the development of professional communication and tested the proficiency of both coordinator and mentor. This situation is reflective of what can be expected of professionals by employers and associates in the field of public health and therefore, proved beneficial for pertinent professional progress.

#### Conclusion

There is a common thread in the field of Public Health that is centered around the comprehension that equity is an evolution: a process by which consistent evaluation and modification yield program designs focused on the inclusiveness of the underrepresented. The Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness Program was implemented in attempt to illuminate such populations that were falling through the cracks of the intended beneficiaries, and construct accessible cohorts for these specific individuals. While the program's successes were minimal in that regard, the implications for the agency to continue the project are apparent given that time constraints and inconsistent staffing be topics of contention. In some respects, the project did what it was intended to: discover the underrepresented. However, when considering the extremely small sample size of respondents, combined with the extent to which the agency was able to allocate effort to achieve these goals, the data gathered was still promising. The project

showed solid promise should it be adopted by the agency given that a specific employee be appointed to the outreach responsibilities and mandated to dedicate a minimum of 20 hours a week. With that particular stipulation stated, recommendation for the maintenance and further development of this program is given.

#### Personal Reflection

The opportunity to work on this project, coordinated within the spectrum of existing efforts by the YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program has been one of fundamental value. Due to the specific duties practiced as an intern for the YMCA corporate office and a lifestyle coach, I was privy to the efforts that go into gathering and processing the information necessary in coordinating the development and maintenance of program cohorts. This process produced insight regarding the depth to which researchers and associates must delve in the successful implementation of a health promotion program of this magnitude. Specifically, the comprehension of the statistic that 86 million Americans have prediabetes and only 10 percent of those individuals are aware of it, is crucial in unraveling some of the complications associated with hidden nature of this dangerous disease. (YMCA, 2018) Having this knowledge conveyed the importance of YMCA initiatives and programs and served as the backbone for implementing the Community Outreach for Community Awareness Program. This brought to light the potential power an effective program has in influencing society's behaviors and therefore, the overall health of the community. It also underscored the immense level of discipline necessary that encompasses the production of a successful effort, as patience, persistence and passion for the topic at hand represent a prerequisite for an effective process and result.

Contributions the Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness Program made to the YMCA include creating an efficient structure by which outreach can be coordinated and

maintained in the future and the professional relationship that arose as a result of interorganizational communication and collaboration. The former is comprised of successful research of potential outreach locations, collaborating with health oriented organizations, utilizing the Google calendar for event details and effective communication via email for event staffing, and the strengthening of agency relationships that bolster a network of community resources for future endeavors. When considering the latter, as a result of this program's constant research for outreach venues, a promising professional relationship between the YMCA and a prominent local senior facility blossomed, creating the potential for YMCA programs targeting health benefits for that population be brought to the facility.

This program was designed to address the immediate issue of informing community members of potential dangers prediabetes presents and encouraging a plan of action regarding steps to take to avoid the onset of type 2 diabetes. In recognizing the staggering statistics regarding the health of the community, this program was derived from and geared towards YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program goals. Combatting the severity of fallout linked with lack of access to affordable fruits and vegetables, even within such an agricultural hub is substantial in understanding what conditions may be present in populations in need. Unpacking the causes for a rate of prediabetic citizens being 18 percent higher than the national average (Health Policy, 2014) and the financial burden of diabetes for this county being a staggering \$51,643,589 more than the neighboring county of Santa Cruz for the year 2010 (Brown, Gonzalez & Dhau, 2015), explains why the project's goals indicate a broader social significance.

In order to further improve upon the project, expanding upon the questions included on the surveys would be a solid starting point. To elaborate, aside from gathering data on the areas in which respondents are geographically located and if they are aware of the disease of



prediabetes, perhaps, delving into whether the public possessed knowledge pertaining to the causes and consequences of the disease could have been advantageous. For example, despite the common misconception that due to the magnitude of fruits and vegetables produced within the region, Monterey County is indeed a food desert that offers minimal access to these healthy foods for those living below the poverty line. Therefore, including a question or two regarding the consequences of a poor diet or lack of physical activity and how that is directly linked with the disease would add to the data gathered, indicating a population in need exists. Additionally, utilizing the notion that the keys to each population's need lie within those by which it is comprised, inquiring what the respondents believe would be most helpful in assisting on a path to better health would be especially beneficial.

A recommendation that I would give to any intern that may decide upon coordinating community outreach events for the various YMCA health related programs would be to focus primarily on time management. Being extremely consistent and timely concerning the communication between organizations is crucial to the success of creating collaborative bonds between agencies, obtaining worthwhile venue locations, as well as maintaining that outreach staff are available and willing to make a presence at said events is of extreme importance. The significance of these stipulations cannot be overstated, as the very core of outreach coordination was contingent upon these basic principles for the Community Outreach for Diabetes Awareness Program. Any intern stepping into this position must also focus heavily on an ability to adapt and modify as the process evolves to meet the ever-changing needs of the populations in need. These skills are not only beneficial as an intern and student, but more importantly, as a professional in the field of Public Health.

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## Appendices

| <b>Activities</b>            | <b>Deliverables</b>        | <b>Time/Deadlines</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Lifestyle Coach Training     | Knowledge of program       | August, 2017          |
| Internship Hours             | Professional development   | Ongoing/weekly        |
| Lifestyle Coaching           | Leadership skills          | Ongoing               |
| Mentor/Instructor Meeting    | Collaboration              | Each Semester         |
| Mentor Meetings              | Professional communication | Ongoing/Monthly       |
| Research/Propose Events      | Networking                 | Ongoing/Monthly       |
| Create Google Calendar       | Professional Development   | July, 2018            |
| Contact Interns for Outreach | Professional communication | Ongoing               |
| Contact Event Coordinators   | Professional communication | Ongoing               |
| Schedule Available Staff     | Collaboration              | Ongoing               |
| Follow up                    | Professional communication | Ongoing               |
| Create and Modify Surveys    | Collaboration              | Ongoing/Monthly       |
| Attend Outreach Events       | Collaboration              | Ongoing               |
| Modify Event Locations       | Collaboration              | Ongoing               |

Salinas Employee Health Fair, October 3, 2018  
YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program  
500 Lincoln Avenue  
Salinas, Ca, 93901

Where do you live?

Donde vives?

Are you aware that there is a disease called Prediabetes?

Sabe usted que hay una enfermedad llamada prediabetes?

Name of Outreach Event

Date of Outreach Event

YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program

[illegible]

